



## Hanukkah

Hanukkah is the Jewish eight-day 'festival of lights', celebrated with a nightly menorah lighting, special prayers, fried foods, games and music.

Hanukkah begins on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, which is the ninth month in the Jewish calendar. This falls any time between late November and late December.

Hanukkah celebrates a miracle that took place over 2,000 year ago, according to the Torah, the Jewish holy book. At this time, the Holy Land (an area between the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and the River Jordan) was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks), who tried to force the Jewish people living there to worship Greek gods. Although there were only a few of them, a small group of Jews, called Maccabees and led by a man named Judah, defeated a group of Seleucids and reclaimed the city of Jerusalem for the Jewish faith.

However, when they wanted to light the menorah in Jerusalem's temple, they found that only a tiny amount of the holy purified olive oil had survived the battle; hardly enough to light even one candle. But they managed to light the menorah and miraculously the one-day supply of oil that had survived the battle lasted for eight days.

Today, the nightly lighting of the menorah is therefore a central part of Hanukkah. Most families place their menorah in a doorway or window so that everyone can see it. On the first night, just one candle is lit. On the second night, a second is lit. Often, family members take turns so that they all can light at least one of the candles. By the eighth night of Hanukkah, all eight candles are burning. On each night of Hanukkah, special prayers are recited before the menorah is lit, and traditional songs are sung afterwards. The menorah is also lit in synagogues and other public places such as parks and shopping malls.

Because oil is a central feature of the Hanukkah miracle, fried foods such as latkes and deep-fried doughnuts are usually eaten.

At Hanukkah children and adults play a traditional game with a 'dreidel' on which is written four Hebrew letters. In the game, players win or lose their pile of coins, nuts, or sweets depending which letter the dreidel lands on when it stops spinning.

The giving of gifts is also a part of today's Hanukkah celebrations. In the past, money was given to children to reward them for their good behaviour. Today this has developed into the giving of foil-covered chocolate money called 'Hanukkah gelt'.

## 1. Find the information

Read the text about Hanukkah. Answer the questions below with information from the text.

1. Where and when did the miracle of Hanukkah take place?
2. Who did the group of Jews reclaim the temple from?
3. Who was the leader of the group of Jews?
4. What miracle took place?
5. What kind of oil was used to light the temple menorah?

## 2. Key words

A. Drag each of the things connected with Hanukkah to the descriptions.



dreidel/sevivon



menorah



latke



Horah



Hanukkah gelt

1. A tall silver seven or nine-branched candelabra. The branches are positioned in one line, and each branch holds one special candle. \_\_\_\_\_
2. A four-sided spinning top that people play with during Hanukkah. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Money and/or chocolate coins given to Jewish children for the festival of Hanukkah. \_\_\_\_\_
4. A traditional dance at weddings and holidays, in which people dance together in a circle to traditional Jewish folk music. \_\_\_\_\_
5. A potato pancake which is usually fried in oil and served with apple sauce or sour cream. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Find the words in the article that match to the definitions below and write them down.

1. An event that cannot be explained according to the laws of nature and is considered to be an act of God.
2. Govern and have control of an area.
3. Make someone do something that they do not want to do, for example by using or threatening to use violence.
4. Win against someone in a fight or battle.
5. To receive an item back that somebody has taken from you.
6. Say a poem, story or prayer that you have learnt to other people.
7. A building used by Jewish people for worship and religious study.
8. Very light thin sheets of metal used for wrapping things, especially food.

### 3. Bohemian Chanukah (song)

Watch the adaptation of Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody performed by **Six13**, a Jewish six-man a cappella vocal band, and review the origin of Chanukah.

Rewrite the statements changing each one of them into active or passive voice accordingly.

1. The Jewish escape from Greek tyranny is celebrated in Hanukkah.
2. The Maccabees have led the Jews to victory.
3. Their faith had been banned by Anntiochus and the Torah could not be read anymore.
4. Their heritage would not be thrown away by Judah.
5. The miracles will always be recalled by the Jewish people.
6. Children spin the dreidel and they get lots of gelt.
7. Candles are lit by the whole family and the joy of their proud history is shared.
8. They fry latke to celebrate the Maccabees because oil recalls the miraculous lights.